

SUMMARY

RANGE-WIDE BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT CONSERVATION TEAM MEETING

March 12, 2003

Room 1050

**Utah Department of Natural Resources
Salt Lake City, Utah**

Thirty-six biologists, administrators and NGO representatives attended and participated in the annual spring planning meeting. State personnel from Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming were present as well as biologists from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Park Service. Brigham Young University and Utah State University also participated in the meeting. Alan Matheson represented Trout Unlimited.

Yvette Converse, USFWS, said they continue to have contact with environmental groups who have petitioned in the past for listing of Bonneville cutthroat trout but she didn't know of any pending action to challenge or request listing of this subspecies.

The group discussed the possibility of setting up some local tours to review on going projects and problems related to Bonneville cutthroat trout conservation.

We also discussed the need to get information on our conservation efforts and status of cutthroat trout populations available on the Internet. Paul Burnett, graduate student from USU, offered to help with the preparation of an Internet site setup. We will move ahead with that project. Some thought needs to go into where we should house the Internet site and maintenance of the site once it exists. The initial site could be set up for \$2,000 – \$3,000.

Reed Harris, Utah Department of Natural Resources suggested a magazine type publication be done presenting an over view of Bonneville cutthroat trout conservation efforts. That project would cost approximately \$20,000. This type of material has worked well with legislators and local politicians. At the present time funding is probably not available for a glossy publication.

A recommendation was also made to send out meeting notices and summaries to other USFS and BLM offices that aren't represented at the meetings. Invite representatives from those areas to participate, especially if they have Bonneville cutthroat populations within their jurisdiction. If anyone has names and addresses that I should include in our mailing list please get them to me and I'll start sending them notices and information packets.

The group also discussed the present meeting format and whether it was worthwhile and productive. A recommendation was made to use the spring meeting to discuss issues of common concern and to spend less time on proposed work plans. If everyone could get me their proposed work programs prior to the spring meeting I could send those out prior to the meeting. That way we would only have to cover any questions or concerns leaving time for issues. There was also a recommendation to use adhoc committees to deal with local issues within GMU's. Hopefully this idea will become a viable alternative to address local problems and/or projects.

Last fall the group had a lengthy discussion of poor habitat on UM Creek on the Fish Lake National Forest and on impacts of fires on the Fish Lake and Dixie National forests. The group recommended that a letter be sent to the Intermountain Regional Forester expressing the groups concerns. That letter was sent out in January 2003 and a copy is in the summary packet from last falls meeting.

Because of our concerns, Steve Robertson (Acting Supervisor, Dixie National Forest) and Mary Erickson (Supervisor, Fish Lake National Forest) came and presented information to the group addressing our concerns. Both Steve and Mary have expressed an interest in coming back to our fall 2003 meetings to update us on progress with their programs. A handout from Mary and letters of invitation are enclosed.

Steve Roberson discussed the Sanford and Adams Head prescribed burns. A website has been developed to provide information about these fires (www.uppersevier.net). These burns got out of control about the 8th of June and ended up with a perimeter covering 78,000 acres by July 1, 2002. Approximately 50% of the area within that perimeter burned by the time the fires were put out on July 1. Direct fire impacts and run-off have destroyed fisheries in approximately 37 miles of stream. Deep Creek was a remnant population of Bonneville cutthroat trout. Quick action by Utah and USFS biologists resulted in transplanting 200 – 300 of these fish to Ten Mile Creek before post fire runoff killed all the remaining fish. Fire fighting efforts cost \$6 million and to date \$160,000 has been spent on reseeding and installation of log retention barriers. Steve said they have learned some valuable lessons from this fire. Attached is a follow-up letter from Steve with some information on how biologists and stakeholders can become more involved in fire planning.

Fortunately for the Deep Creek Bonneville cutthroat trout population, DWR and USFS biologists had laid the groundwork and had Ten Mile Creek ready to receive salvaged fish from Deep Creek. If there hadn't been a strong, proactive conservation program in place the Deep Creek population would have been completely lost. Dale Hepworth, UDWR Southern Region Aquatic Program Manager stressed with the group that biologists need to be more aggressive in efforts to duplicate remnant populations into several waters and not just adjoining streams. Several streams adjacent to Deep Creek also burned and fisheries were lost. As a result of the fire Bonneville cutthroat trout from Ten Mile Creek will be stocked into those streams as well in a few years. An aggressive habitat recovery program is needed in Deep Creek and surrounding waters to make sure good habitat is developed for future populations of Bonneville cutthroat trout.

Attached is a letter from Trout Unlimited to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service expressing concerns over the use of toxic fire retardants. It's good to see some of the local concerns are getting additional support.

Mary Erickson told us that she wasn't happy with USFS grazing management on UM Creek and that better management of that area is a Fish Lake National Forest priority. There have been some procedural problems in a recent attempt to make grazing reductions but USFS personnel are working through those. So far the permittees have been unwilling to recognize they are a part of any problems. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has been writing letters to the USFS for decades over concerns with habitat and land management in the UM Creek area. Personally, I was frustrated that to date there seems to be no connection between DWR concerns and what the USFS has done on the ground. Questions were asked about the Fish Lake National Forest Plan and maybe it is outdated. Mary has expressed a desire to come back at our fall meeting to up date our group. Mary passed out a draft strategy for improving UM Creek riparian habitat (copy attached).

I want to thank both Steve and Mary for taking time to come to the spring meeting. This is the first time we have had a Forest Supervisor take the time to come and address our concerns over land management issues. I am also encouraged by their desire to come back next fall to update our group on progress they have made with both of these important issues.

Deb Mignogno and Yvette Converse with the USFWS lead a discussion regarding Bonneville cutthroat management in Bear Lake and its tributaries. There are concerns over water management impacts on developing wild stocks of fish that can run out of the lake into tributaries and then have young recruit back into the lake. Idaho Department of Fish and Game has been working hard to solve problems with fish access to the streams and survival and migration of young back into the lake. St. Charles Creek has been the site of numerous graduate student projects through Utah State University. A meeting has been set up for March 27, 2003. The focus of the meeting will be to pull together a wide coalition of agencies and stakeholders to see if some acceptable solutions to long-standing problems can be identified and solutions found that will benefit the fishery and local needs.

Agency Summaries (outline of attachments):

1. Idaho Department of Fish and Game
2. Nevada
 - a. Nevada Division of Wildlife
 - b. Great Basin National Park
 - c. Don Duff/TU Memo

- d. Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation
- 3. Wyoming
- 4. Utah
 - a. Central Region (summary and report)
 - b. Northern Region
 - c. Southern Region
 - d. USFS – Intermountain Reporter
 - e. USFS – Wasatch-Cache National Forest
 - f. US Bureau of Land Management